



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA BOOSTS EFFORTS TO HELP PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES START AND GROW THEIR BUSINESSES

WASHINGTON – Aida Alvarez, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, joined Vice President Al Gore today in announcing SBA's intent to develop a new outreach campaign to help Americans with disabilities start their own businesses. The announcement came during a meeting of the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults With Disabilities.

"Small businesses are the primary engine of job growth in America today," Vice President Gore said. **"People with disabilities have higher rates of self-employment and small business experience than the rest of America, yet they often are not aware of the assistance available to them. This campaign would open the doors of opportunity wider to help Americans with disabilities get the assistance they need to create businesses that create jobs."**

Administrator Alvarez noted that the entrepreneurial spirit is not limited to any single group. **"We've mounted an aggressive effort to make our programs and services readily available to everyone who needs them. When people with disabilities have equal access to entrepreneurial opportunities, it helps to enrich their lives and benefits all of us,"** she said.

The Vice President asked the SBA to begin implementing right away the task force's recommendation to reach out to people with disabilities who want to start their own businesses or are currently operating a small business.

The new outreach campaign would provide greater access to SBA's entrepreneurial development programs, financial assistance incentives, and government contracting opportunities, including the Section 8(a) program, HUB Zones, and the small disadvantaged business program.

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Vice President Gore commended the task force's first report "Re-Charting the Course" and called for immediate implementation of specific recommendations, reflecting the administration's longstanding commitment

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The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans worth more than \$45 billion, the SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, the SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than one million small business owners. The SBA also plays a major role in the government's disaster relief efforts by making low-interest recovery loans to both homeowners and businesses.

America's 23 million small businesses employ more than 50 percent of the private workforce, generate more than half of the nation's gross domestic product, and are the principal source of new jobs in the U.S. economy.

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